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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER FOLLOWS UP WITH AMBASSADOR ON REQUESTS TO SECRETARY GATES

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr. for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary: Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama invited Ambassador for a one-on-one meeting the evening of June 13th to discuss his requests to Secretary Gates at their recent meeting in Singapore for enhanced US-Sri Lankan maritime surveillance cooperation, UAVs, and enhanced intelligence cooperation. The Ambassador briefed the Minister on Raytheon's plan to complete installation of a USG-funded maritime radar system by August 2007 and the GSL's recent letter of intent to purchase two Beechcraft King Air 350s with maritime surveillance radar and day night cameras for the Sri Lankan Air Force. He cautioned that the GSL's UAV request would be more controversial because of continued US concerns about human rights and whether the GSL will pursue an offensive military strategy. Regarding intel cooperation, Bogollagama said the GSL is particularly interested in receiving more information regarding LTTE weapons procurement in other countries, particularly in Southeast Asia. Embassy would appreciate Department guidance on whether there is scope to share more intelligence information with the GSL on LTTE weapons procurement efforts.
End Summary.

USG Efforts to Improve Sri Lankan Maritime Surveillance

¶2. (C) With respect to maritime surveillance, the Ambassador took the opportunity to brief the Minister on the status of USG efforts to help Sri Lanka improve its capabilities. He informed Bogollagama that Raytheon had recently briefed the Sri Lankan military that it planned to complete installation of USG-funded maritime radar and sensors in Trincomalee, Point Pedro, and Mannar, together with an operations center in Trincomalee, by August of this year. In addition, the U.S. is pleased that Defense Secretary Rajapaksa had authorized Air Force Commander Goonetileke to sign a letter of intent earlier in the week to purchase two Beechcraft King Air 350s with maritime surveillance radar and day night cameras for the Sri Lankan Air Force. Depending on how quickly financing could be lined up, Raytheon expected to be able to supply these aircraft within as early as 18 months. In addition, the USG is seeking funding for a system that would link the radar on these two airplanes to the operations center in Trincomalee. The Minister welcomed the

Ambassador's briefing and thanked the USG for its assistance.

UAVs Likely to More Controversial

¶3. (C) The Ambassador cautioned that Sri Lanka's request for UAVs was likely to be more controversial. The Ambassador explained frankly that there would likely be some objections to USG transfer or sale of the UAVs since UAVs, even without air to ground missile configuration, are used for targeting and surveillance and thus can be considered weapons that enable offensive military action. At this stage the United States believes the solution to Sri Lanka's conflict lies in a negotiated settlement and that while Sri Lanka must defend itself against terrorism, it should not pursue an offensive military strategy against the LTTE, nor is the USG prepared to provide weapons that would help prosecute an offensive strategy. Furthermore, there are likely to be human rights concerns, given the Sri Lankan military's alleged involvement in abductions and other human rights abuses.

Serious Devolution Proposal Needed.....

¶4. (C) The Minister acknowledged these concerns, noted the MFA was working to address human rights concerns, and asked the Ambassador's frank advice about what Sri Lanka might do to enhance the possibility of USG approval for UAVs. Cautioning that he was speaking personally and that the USG arms sale process was a complicated one involving many actors, the Ambassador advised that Sri Lanka could help itself by making progress in two major areas. First, it was essential for the current All Parties Representative Committee process to result in a power sharing proposal that

would be considered credible by the majority of Tamils and Muslims. The President's embrace of such a proposal would be particularly important to get it approved in parliament and a popular referendum. Thus far the President had been careful to avoid associating himself too closely with the process and that needed to change. The Minister agreed the President's personal role would be very important and noted the government's commitment to a serious devolution proposal.

And Progress on Human Rights

¶5. (C) The Ambassador noted that the second area where Sri Lanka could help itself would be to significantly improve its human rights performance. The Ambassador commended the Minister's personal efforts to press for progress on human rights, but noted candidly that the trends were still going in the wrong direction. The Ambassador cited the recent abduction and killing of two Red Cross workers, the new phenomenon of abduction of Muslim businesspeople, mostly for ransom, the recent eviction of Tamils from Colombo, and continued threats on the media. The Ambassador advised that the government needed first to stop existing abductions, but also establish a process to investigate and punish those responsible for the hundreds of abductions that had occurred in the past year. The Ambassador welcomed the President's decision to form a committee of parliamentarians to work with the Minister of Human Rights to respond to public queries as to the whereabouts of those abducted. But the Tillekeratne Commission thus far had made little progress in investigating past abductions. The Ambassador urged that the government prosecute the perpetrators of the murder of the two Red Cross workers since the government apparently has eyewitness accounts as well as the license plate number of the van in which the workers were abducted. The Ambassador also urged that the government prosecute the egregious cases of military human rights abuses for which there is clear evidence to show that it wants to stop abuses by the Sri Lankan military.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador briefed Bogollagama on conversations he had had with Defense Secretary Rajapaksa on improving Sri Lanka's military justice system. These conversations had

covered the need for the government to find judicial ways to detain LTTE suspects without having to resort to abductions by paramilitaries to get such suspects off the streets. The US understood that the Sri Lankan judicial system, both the civil and military side, needed to be updated to reflect post 9/11 circumstances. For example, Sri Lankan law did not permit testimony by suspects given to police officers to be admissible in court. To help Sri Lanka take a fresh look at its military justice system, the US planned to send out a team in August to take a hard look at Sri Lanka's system and offer recommendations about how it might be improved. The Minister nodded and said such improvements would be very important.

Intelligence Sharing on LTTE Arms Procurement

¶ 17. (S) With respect to intelligence cooperation the Ambassador asked exactly what the GSL had in mind. Bogollagama responded that the GSL was particularly interested in receiving more information regarding LTTE weapons procurement in other countries, particularly in Southeast Asia. The government had launched diplomatic efforts to work with the governments from Indonesia and other countries to sensitize them about the need to prevent the LTTE from using their ports and other facilities to export weapons to Sri Lanka. The Minister explained that the principal handicap the MFA faced in such efforts was the absence of good actionable intelligence that it could use to pursue its diplomatic campaign. The Ambassador agreed to pass on the Minister's request to see what might be shared, but he also cautioned that it would be extremely important for the US to have assurances that whatever might be shared would not be leaked to the press, since very little in Colombo remains a secret. The United States is very sensitive about protecting sources and methods and any leaks would endanger the lives of sources and would bring an immediate end to intelligence sharing. The Minister gave his assurances.

Action Request

¶ 18. (S) Embassy would appreciate Department guidance on whether there is scope to share more intelligence information with the GSL on LTTE weapons procurement efforts.

BLAKE